

Salt Spring Island

Housing Action Program Task Force Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation

The Salt Spring Island Local Trust receives this Housing Action Program Task Force (HAPTF) report dated August 30, 2022, reviews the diverse housing recommendations and posts them publicly on the Islands Trust website for community discussion.

Purpose

To provide the LTC with a summary of recommended actions discussed to date for diverse, affordable, and sustainable housing options for the Salt Spring Island Community, which can help to alleviate the strains of the housing crisis.

Background

Under the [Terms of Reference](#), the HAPTF is a citizen-led, staff-facilitated working group mandated to provide advice and recommendations to the LTC to help achieve better housing affordability, diversity in the types of housing options, and environmental sustainability as it relates to the locations, sizes, and designs of housing development. The HAPTF recognizes that the housing challenges on the island are impacting many aspects of community life, including access to essential services, viability for business, and a lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion. As the [National Housing Strategy Act](#) outlines, we recognize that adequate housing is essential to individual dignity and well-being and building sustainable and inclusive communities. Moreover, we recognize adequate housing as a fundamental human right affirmed in [international law](#). Our goal is to support improved housing outcomes for residents of Salt Spring Island, particularly those in greatest need, and in ways that maintain and improve the environmental quality of the island and the surrounding waters of the Salish Sea.

Accordingly, we have identified five (5) core recommendations for consideration, which focus primarily on land use planning as the remit of the Islands Trust. In addition, the recommendations identify priorities and initiatives to further the community's housing objectives identified in the [Official Community Plan](#), which takes into account key principles of a human rights-based approach to housing and the need to develop zoning that allows many different types of housing and accommodates a diverse population (p. 23). Timeframes and indicators for measuring progress against these recommended actions are essential. The recommendations have been identified based on a review of evidence and relevant reports, including but not limited to:

- [CRD 2022 Southern Gulf Islands Housing Strategy](#)
- [BC Housing 2021 Accessory Dwelling Units Case Studies](#)
- [CRD 2020 Housing Needs Assessment SSI](#)
- [SGI Housing Feasibility Analysis](#)
- [SGI Market Analysis](#)
- [2003 Options for Affordable Housing](#)
- [IT 2005 Community Housing Background Report](#)
- [IT 2010 Community Housing Tool Kit](#)
- [IT 2010 Seniors Housing Strategy](#)
- [IT 2011 Affordable Housing Guide Final](#)
- [IT 2016 Community Housing Report](#)
- [IT 2019 Baseline Affordable Housing Report](#)
- [IT 2020 Housing Working Group Report](#)

Housing Recommendations

1. **Recommendation: Increase interagency collaboration and advocacy for affordable housing**

Rationale: To promote a coordinated, whole-government approach to and advocacy for housing solutions.

- 1.1. Establish an interagency Housing Authority, whereby indigenous, provincial, territorial, and local governments (e.g., CRD, water districts) collaborate and work together on housing issues and identify the improvements each government agency can advance to improve housing supply of all types with particular focus on multi-family projects close to village centers, bus routes and water supply.
- 1.2. LTC should address and manage barriers to affordable housing strategies through partnerships with the government and civil society to support education and information campaigns about the benefits of affordable housing, improve community engagement, and mobilize community leaders. For example, see [Civida toolkits](#) on community engagement, public campaigns, and reducing community opposition.
- 1.3. Collaborative processes described in 1.1 and 1.2 should ensure the ongoing inclusion and engagement of civil society, stakeholders, vulnerable groups, and persons with lived experience of housing need, as well as those with lived experience of homelessness and persons who reflect the diversity of the Salt Spring community. Also, consider engaging persons who have expertise in human rights.
- 1.4. Better data and research: monitor the implementation of housing strategies and pilot projects to assess their impact on persons who are members of vulnerable groups and with lived experience of housing need or homelessness. Further, monitor progress in meeting the housing objectives (i.e., diverse housing types)— and in achieving the desired outcomes (i.e., socio-economic diversity)— set out in the Official Community Plan and relevant housing strategies; and fund research on systemic housing issues, including barriers faced by persons with lived experience of housing need or homelessness, as recommended in the [National Housing Strategy Act](#).

2. Recommendation: Support gentle and moderate density in appropriate areas

Rationale: to ensure the land use code better reflects the aspirations and values inscribed in our Official Community Plan, including supporting a diverse mix of housing types that foster a diverse population across the socioeconomic spectrum, including seniors, people with disabilities, workers, and those with low and median incomes. A [2022 housing survey of Salt Spring Island](#)

[residents](#) conducted by the Islands Trust suggests that 84% of respondents approve of legalizing secondary suites in accessory dwellings, and 8% disagree that they should be legalized (figure 1).

Secondary suites should be permitted in an accessory structure



Source: Salt Spring Islands Trust Housing Survey Phase I (2022) • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 1. Survey of housing needs on Salt Spring Island

- 2.1. Permit secondary suites and accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in all residential zones if provided for long-term rental or family use (not short-term rental).
- 2.2. Adequate water supply and safe waste treatment must be proven to obtain permits.
 - 2.2.1. Mandate that where water concerns exist, an alternative supply must be used (e.g., rainwater).
 - 2.2.2. Recommend that wastewater systems be monitored.
- 2.3. Update the potable water requirement to align with the Island Health Multi-family building requirement of approximately 220 L per person daily.
- 2.4. Enable the strata conversion of detached accessory dwelling units based on specific conditions identified in the [BC Housing ADU Report](#) as a potentially effective *practice of interest* for small to medium-sized BC communities. This allows for affordable home ownership and land sharing.

3. Recommendation: Enable alternative housing types

Rationale: Encourage alternative types of land tenure to reduce land costs and respond to demands for alternatives to traditional housing from the community.

- 3.1. Enable low-cost, alternative housing types, such as tiny homes, both stationary and mobile. As recommended in the [Southern Gulf Islands Housing Strategy](#), this might include advocacy supporting regulatory change to enable the building and financing of small dwellings (under 600ft) and the Provincial Government to reconcile the B.C.

Building Code to give people more diverse housing options and evaluate opportunities for alternative building approvals (see also the HAPTF report on tiny homes P.22-75 [2022-09-01 Task Force Agenda Package.pdf](#)).

- 3.2. Invite, support, and facilitate private property owners to apply for pilot project rezoning to accommodate tiny home villages, tiny home mobile parks, and new forms of land tenure (i.e., leasing pads). For example, the LTC could support a pilot project for a tiny home village where the model provides serviced pad rentals with shared services.

4. Recommendation: Reduce Environmental Impact per Capita through Homeplate, Ecovillage, and Flexible Zoning as well as Ecological Building credits and Transferring Density closer to village centers

- 4.1. **Homeplate Zoning Model.** Allow for flexibility of dwelling type and size within maximum total floor area (e.g., 500m²) in exchange for a land covenant on at least 50 % of the property, allowing only eco forestry and another 20-30% allowing eco-forestry, permaculture, or organic farming.
- 4.2. **Ecovillage Zoning Model.** Allow existing Subdividable Properties to be developed according to the Homeplate Zoning principle as a strata development with flexible dwelling types and sizes while placing large portions of property in a conservation covenant. For example, a 50-hectare lot could be traditionally subdivided into 10 x 5 ha. Parcels. Instead allow for 10 x 500m² = 5000m² total floor area of dwelling space concentrated into a single limited portion of the property, protecting at least 50% of the property for eco forestry or conservation only and another 30% allowing eco-forestry, permaculture, or organic farming. Incorporate the ecological building principles of the Eco-Density Bonus and maintain full protection of the most sensitive ecosystems through DPAs.
- 4.3. **Eco-Density Bonus.** Encourage ecological and energy and efficient water homes by allowing a provision to add dwelling space if the owner builds to a higher ecological standard (e.g., solar panels, rainwater harvesting, ecological building materials, grey water recycling, net zero energy, solar hot water, etc.). These provisions will help reduce the operating costs and ecological impacts of dwellings.

- 4.4. **Flexible Zoning Model.** Establish a zoning model that will allow additional dwellings within a maximum total combined square footage of all dwellings, including the principal dwelling, according to the lot size to floor area ratio schedule outlined in the Mayne Island Flexible Housing proposed bylaw. Allows proponents who can prove adequate water and fit these ratio requirements to apply for rezoning with prescriptive certainty. (link to Mayne Island LTC Staff report: [2022-06-27 Staff Report.pdf](#) and excerpt below).
- 4.5. **Density Transfer Mechanism.** Update mechanism to be viable so that “densities” are transferred out of large landlocked undeveloped areas and added closer to villages and infrastructure. It needs to be commercially viable for developers to work. The community amenity is preserving undeveloped large properties as forests. No additional amenities should be required. This could be combined with other incentives for forest preservation, such as carbon storage credits. This will reduce the overall “buildout” of principal residences.
- 4.6. **Commercial Zoning.** Encourage a “lights on” community in village centers where people can live, work and play within walking distance by allowing residential accommodation above commercial properties up to 4 stories.

5. Recommendation: Decrease current and future housing loss due to short-term vacation rental activity

Rationale: The proliferation of unregulated short-term rentals worsens both housing availability and affordability system-wide.

- 5.1. Establish a regulatory and enforcement system for short-term vacation rentals, including setting specific goals, ensuring simple, easy-to-understand regulations, and, most critically, establishing a system for licensing operators (e.g., in conjunction with CRD).
- 5.2. Update BnB bylaw requirements to allow for more flexible seasonal, short-term accommodation, such as glamping that does not compete with suitable long-term rental spaces while still providing income for the resident home-based businesses (see pages 13-16: [2022-07-07 Task Force Agenda Package.pdf](#)).

* Excerpt from Mayne Island's proposed Flexible Housing bylaw describing lot size and floor area ratio:

(a) On lots having an area less than 0.6 ha (1.5 acres) hectares, one additional dwelling is permitted if the total combined square footage of all dwellings does not exceed 232 m² (2500 square feet).

(b) On lots having an area of 0.6 ha (1.5 acres) or greater and not exceeding 1.2 hectares (3 acres), two dwellings, and a cottage are permitted if the total combined square footage of all dwellings and cottages does not exceed 325m² (3500 square feet).

(c) On lots having an area of 1.2 ha (3 acres) or greater, and not exceeding 4 hectares (10 acres), three dwellings and a cottage are permitted if the total combined square footage of all dwellings and cottages does not exceed 436 m² (4750 square feet).